

International Sunday School Lesson
Study Notes
May 8, 2016

Lesson Text: Luke 17:11-19
Lesson Title: Grateful Faith

Introduction

Gratitude should come naturally to believers who have placed their faith and trust in Jesus Christ (Ephesians 5:20; Colossians 3:15). The single, greatest act of worship the believer can give to God is to be grateful for salvation. The very essence of an unsaved person is ingratitude (Romans 1:21). Genuine gratitude is not a matter of feeling; it is a matter of faith.

The story of the ten lepers often focuses on the nine who did not return to give thanks to the Lord for their healing. But Luke's emphasis rests upon the one Samaritan leper who returned with a grateful heart for his healing and salvation. A man least likely to be grateful became the one man in Scripture we remember for genuine gratitude and thanksgiving.

Grateful Faith is Rare (Luke 17:11-14)

Verse 11

“And it came to pass, as he went to Jerusalem, that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee.”

In Luke 9:51, Jesus began moving in the direction of Jerusalem, where the final months of His ministry and life would take place. During His journey to the cross He preached and taught the gospel of the kingdom, performed miracles, cast out demons, spoke about judgment and eternal punishment, and healed the sick. Only heaven will reveal how many souls Jesus saved and how many individuals Jesus healed and blessed during these final months of His earthly ministry.

On this particular day, “he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee.” This is the area we call Galilee today, near the West Bank. He is traveling along the border between “Samaria and Galilee.” He avoids getting too close to “Galilee,” where Herod Antipas wants to kill him. Apparently some people from Galilee join Him and walk with Him as He moves toward Jerusalem (Matthew 27:55; Mark 15:41).

Verse 12-13

“And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off: And they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.”

First, the “ten men” who met Jesus “were lepers.” Leprosy was common in Israel since the days of the prophets (Luke 4:27). The word “leper” comes from the Greek word *lepros* {lep-ros} which means “scaly.” It is a word used to identify scaly skin manifested disease. Leprosy was a loathsome and very contagious disease as indicated in the words “which stood afar off.” Biblical leprosy consisted of a variety of skin diseases that could have included lupus, sores, and multiple skin disorders. Lepers were required to keep their distance from people and cry out, “Unclean!” (Leviticus 13:45-46) when approaching people or a populated area. Because of the ostracism, lepers sought out each other, even those with whom they would not ordinarily associate, like a “Samaritan.”

Note: Leprosy is a picture of man’s sinfulness (Isaiah 64:6). Like leprosy, sin alienates, isolates, separates from real living, destroys the whole person, and ends in death.

Second, the “ten men that were lepers” were willing to ask Jesus to help them. They “lifted up their voices, and said, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.” Their use of the word “Master” in connection with Jesus is significant. It is the Greek word *epistates* {ep-is-tat-ace} which means “an appointee over, a commander.” It was used in connection with someone who had authority and power. By using the word “Master,” the lepers indicate they are familiar with Jesus’ power and authority over sickness and disease. Perhaps they had witnessed some of His miracles in Galilee or heard second-hand about His teachings and healings. Knowing they had no hope outside the miraculous power of Jesus, they cried, “Master, have mercy on us.”

Verse 14

“And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed.”

On other occasions Jesus went to lepers and touched them (Luke 5:12-13). In this particular case, Jesus “saw them” and “said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests...” He did not touch the lepers. He did not command the leprosy to depart. He did not heal them on the spot. He is testing their faith while upholding the law of the leper in Leviticus 13 and 14.

Third, when Jesus tells the men to go show themselves to “the priest,” they obey. Do not miss the importance of this requirement and their obedience. A leper would never go near a “priest” if he still had “leprosy.” So Jesus’ command to “go show yourselves unto the priest” was a test of their faith. It

was a promise He would heal them before they arrived to be examined by the priest.

Israel's government at that time was what is called a *theocracy*. God ruled the nation, and He ruled locally through "priests." The "priest" was not only the spiritual leader of that community, he was also the medical leader. Jesus told the lepers, "Go, shew yourselves unto the priests." That meant the "priests" had medical ability and authority to examine them and declare them healed. He also could give them a legal document so no one could challenge the fact they were still a leper and should be quarantined. It was essential for a leper to show himself to the priest (Leviticus 13 and 14).

As the ten lepers were on their way to see the priest, "they were cleansed." They exercised basic faith in the healing power of Jesus. Jesus healed them as they moved in obedience to His command. The word "cleansed" is the Greek word *katharizo* {kath-ar-id-zo}. It means "to cleanse, purge, or purify."

Once these men arrived the priests would be required to declare they were "cleansed." These ten men would be living testimonies to the healing power of Jesus Christ. But grateful faith goes much deeper than the physical healing of leprosy.

Note: The ten men were willing to ask Jesus for mercy and obey his commands but as a group they were not willing to be grateful. Genuine gratitude is rare, even among the obedient and recipients of God's mercy.

Grateful Faith is Real (Luke 17:15-16)

Verse 15-16

"And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, And fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan."

Up to this point in the story, the ten lepers had acted in unison. All had "met" Jesus; all had "lifted up their voice" asking for "mercy" and healing; all obeyed His command and went to show themselves to the priests; all had been "cleansed." At that point, something different takes place. Luke tells us "one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned, and with a loud voice glorified God."

Leprosy often affected the voice. This man's healing had restored his ability to vocalize so he "glorifies God" with "a loud voice." It is the Greek word *meGas*. "Voice" is the Greek word *phone*. Luke uses these words to tell us this man burst out in vocal gratitude to God. "Glorifying God" means this man knew where the power came from to cleanse him of his leprosy. He also knows Jesus

is “God” because he “fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks...” The fact that he was a “Samaritan” meant he knew that only “God” was to be worshipped. By falling at the feet of Jesus this cleansed leper is saying, “Jesus, I worship you, you are God incarnated!”

The “nine” who did not return were obviously overjoyed at the prospect of returning to a normal life with family and friends, but only “one of them” grasped the profound implications of what had happened to him personally. Recognizing he had been in the presence of God, he wanted more than a mere physical healing; his heart longed for salvation from the divine Healer. So he returned, “And fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks...”

Grateful faith is real because it is rooted in the reality of the person of Jesus Christ!

Grateful Faith is Rewarded (Luke 17:17-19)

Verse 17-18

“And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger.”

Jesus asked, “Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?” “Where” is used in the sense they ought to be here with the one who returned. Maybe they are going to the temple or reuniting with family and friends. They probably are doing what most lepers would do who had just been healed. They are thrilled and enjoying life. There is nothing sinful about that in and of itself.

When those witnessing this event heard him say, “...and he was a Samaritan,” they must have been stunned. “Samaritans” were despised among Jews but out of the “ten cleansed” this despised “Samaritan” was the only one with grateful faith. Jesus said, “There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger.” “Stranger” means “foreigner, not a Jew.” By pointing out this one leper as a “stranger,” Jesus seems to be indicating some if not all of the other “nine cleansed” were of the house of Israel. If that is true, they should have by their heritage alone been led to give thanks to God. Maybe they were not exactly sure Jesus was God! The cleansed “Samaritan” was sure!

Verse 19

“And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.”

This Samaritan had been “cleansed” (verse 14) because of his faith in the person of Jesus Christ. “Whole” is the Greek word *sozo* {sode-zo}. Luke uses this word to add the meaning of spiritual healing. There is an interesting

contrast with the earlier word, “cleansed” *katharizo* {kath-ar-id-zo}, used in verse 14 and 17. As previously stated, *katharizo* means “to cleanse, purge, or purify.” This one returning man is not only “cleansed,” meaning “purged from leprosy,” he is also “whole,” meaning he is “delivered from sin.”

Jesus’ use of the word “whole” suggests the benefit of trusting Jesus’ ability to deliver. The thankful Samaritan who returned benefited from the healing in a way the other nine did not. All ten were “cleansed,” or purified from leprosy, but only one was made “whole” or saved.

Conclusion

The ungrateful nine in this story represents the Jews of Jesus’ day who wanted His healing and miracles but not a saving relationship. The ungrateful nine represent those among the church today who want Jesus’ health and wealth but not His cross or a life of discipleship.

A grateful faith is a faith which recognizes Gods’ mercy and undeserved blessing. A grateful faith stays close to Jesus and is ever mindful of all He has done to heal us from the deadly disease of sin.

Only ten percent of the recipients of Jesus’ mercy and healing in this story possessed a grateful faith. Are you in the ninety percent group or the ten?

Amen.